

Message Text

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AMCONSUL BOMBAY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 2282

DEPARTMENT PASS SENATOR PERCY'S OFFICE FOR MRS JACOBSEN
DEPT PASS OES/PA
DEPARTMENT PASS SECRETARY (ENROUTE)
USUN FOR YOUNG
CIA FOR TURNER

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IN, US
SUBJ: SENATOR PERCY'S MEETING WITH DR KAREN SINGH

1. SENATOR AND MRS PERCY, CONGRESSMAN JOHN CAVANAUGH
AND EMBASSY SCIENCE OFFICER MET WITH DR KAREN SINGH,
MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING, ON SUNDAY
EVENING. MRS KAREN SINGH ALSO JOINED THE PARTY
LATER. SENATOR PERCY REVIEWED INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH
ITS NEIGHBORS, PAKISTAN, BANGLADESH, AND NEPAL AND
CITED THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF
INDIA SINCE THE EMERGENCY INCLUDING THE NEW INDIAN
POLICY ON FAMILY PLANNING. SENATOR PERCY ASKED THE
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MINISTER'S OPINION OF THE STATUS OF THE PRESENT ELECTIONS
AND THE EFFECT OF JAGJIVAN RAM'S LEAVING THE CONGRESS
PARTY AND FORMING A PARTY OF HIS OWN. HE SAID THE US
CONGRESS WAS WATCHING THE INDIAN SITUATION CLOSELY AND
WAS CERTAINLY HAPPY TO HEAR OF THE ELECTION.

2. KAREN SINGH STATED THAT BEFORE THE EMERGENCY THE

COUNTRY WAS ALMOST AT THE POINT OF REVOLUTION IF THINGS HAD CONTINUED THE WAY THEY WERE. THE OPPOSITION PARTY INCITED VIOLENCE AND DISORDER IN THE COUNTRY AT EVERY CHANCE. THIS WAS CULMINATED BY THE SPEECH BY J.P. NARAYAN URGING THE POLICE AND ARMY TO REBEL AGAINST THE NATION. THE PRIME MINISTER HAD NO OTHER CHOICE AT THAT POINT BUT TO DECLARE AN EMERGENCY. HE SAID HER BACKGROUND AND HERITAGE WAS OF STRONG DEMOCRATIC LEARNING AND SHE FELT THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY WERE HIGHLY IMPORTANT TO A COUNTRY LIKE INDIA.

3. KAREN SINGH REMARKED THAT THERE WERE FIVE MAJOR POSITIVE EVENTS SINCE THE EMERGENCY HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED:

(1) LAW, ORDER AND PEACE HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED.

(2) THERE HAS BEEN NO INTERRUPTION TO THE INDUSTRIAL SYSTEM AND PRODUCTION HAS GONE UP STEADILY. IN ADDITION, FOREIGN EXCHANGE HAS INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY.

(3) FOOD PRODUCTION HAS GONE UP TREMENDOUSLY; HOWEVER, THIS HAS BEEN DUE TO TWO GOOD MONSOONS. HE SAID "OUR GRAINERIES ARE SIMPLY BURSTING AT THE SEAMS."

(4) THE NEW PROPULATION POLICY FORMULATED AND ANNOUNCED BY HIM IN 1976 WILL HAVE A PROFOUND EFFECT ON THE COUNTRY'S FUTURE EVEN INTO THE 21ST CENTURY. HE SAID HE TAKES FULL CREDIT FOR THIS POLICY AND THAT

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AT THE BUCHAREST POPULATION MEETING INDIA WAS CONDEMNED FOR NOT DOING ANYTHING TO LIMIT ITS POPULATION AND NOW, WHEN THEY ARE DOING SOMETHING, THEY ARE STILL BEING CONDEMNED BY MANY FOREIGN COUNTRIES FOR A POLICY OF COMPULSION AND COERCION. THE MINISTER SAID COMPULSORY STERILIZATION, AS SUCH, WAS NOT PART OF THE PLAN AND THAT WERE IT FOUND IT WOULD BE DEALT WITH SEVERELY. HOWEVER, THE MINISTER SAID THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE A VIGOROUS FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM WITH STERILIZATION AS THE CORNERSTONE. HE HOPES THE STERILIZATION GOAL COULD BE DOUBLED IN THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR. HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN 7 MILLION STERILIZATIONS FROM APRIL TO DECEMBER 1976. THIS MOMENTUM WILL BE CONTINUED AFTER A PERIOD OF CONSOLIDATION AND PLANNING FOR THE NEXT MONTH OR TWO. THE MINISTER FEELS THAT THE EMERGENCY ITSELF HAD CREATED A NEW EMPHASIS TO FAMILY PLANNING AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL AND THE ENTIRE GOVERNMENT, FROM TOP TO BOTTOM WAS COMMITTED TO CARRY OUT THIS POLICY WHICH WILL EVENTUALLY REACH EVERY VILLAGE

IN INDIA. HE REITERATED THAT THE MAIN PROBLEM IN THE COUNTRY IS POVERTY BUT HE FEELS THAT THIS IS NOW BEING DEALT WITH BY MANY NEW GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS. HE SAID THE PRESENT FAMILY PLANNING EMPHASIS IS SHORT-TERM BUT THAT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IS THE LONG TERM ANSWER.

(T) IN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, KAREN SINGH SAID INDIA HAS A DETENTE WITH PAKISTAN AND HAS WORKED OUT PROMISING RELATIONS WITH SRI LANKA AND NEPAL. THEIR ONE PROBLEM NOW REMAINS WITH BANGLADESH. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT TAKING ALL THIS INTO CONSIDERATION, MANY OF MRS GANDHI'S ADVISORS INCLUDING HIMSELF IMPRESSED UPON HER THE IMPORTANCE OF OBTAINING A NEW MANDATE FROM THE PEOPLE AT THE POLLS. SHE AGREED, AND CONSENTED TO HOLD ELECTIONS AND GO TO THE PEOPLE WITH THESE NEW POLICIES. HE SAID AFTER THE ELECTIONS WERE ANNOUNCED THE OPPOSITION PARTY

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THE OPPOSITION PARTY CAME RAPIDLY TOGETHER AND WILL MAKE A FORMIDABLE CONTEST. HOWEVER, THE MINISTER FEELS THAT ONE OF INDIA'S WEAKNESSES IN THE PAST HAS BEEN NO OPPOSITION PARTY. MANY, HE SAID, FEEL IT IS HEALTHY TO HAVE A GOOD SOLID OPPOSITION. HE SAID JAGJIVAN RAM'S POSITION NOW IS TO REGROUP THE PARTIES AND PULL THE OLD GUARD TOGETHER. THE COUNTRY, HE FEELS, SEEMS TO BE HAVING THE BEGINNING OF A PARTY SYSTEM. THERE ARE 542 SEATS IN THE LAKH SABHA AND HE IS CONFIDENT THAT THE CONGRESS WILL WIN 300 PLUS AND HAVE A CLEAR MAJORITY. HE THINKS IN THE FUTURE THERE WILL BE FEWER PARTIES BUT THIS WILL KEEP THE CONGRESS ON ITS TOES.

4. FINALLY KAREN SINGH INDICATED THAT THERE IS A DEFINITE TREND TOWARD BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND INDIA. HE SAID THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION SEEMS TO HAVE A FRESH OUTLOOK AND OPEN MIND TOWARD INDIA.

5. SENATOR PERCY SAID THAT BOTH PRESIDENT CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE STATED THAT THERE WILL BE NO TILT TOWARD PAKISTAN AND THAT THERE SHOULD BE AN EQUAL BALANCE OF RELATIONS IN THE SUB-CONTINENT. HE SAID, IN GENERAL THERE SEEMS TO BE A NORMALIZATION OF INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA AND THAT THE NEW INDIAN AMBASSADOR KEWAL SINGH SEEMS TO BE THE RIGHT PERSON AT THE RIGHT TIME.

6. CLEARED BY SENATOR PERCY IN DRAFT.

7. DEPARTMENT PLEASE DISTRIBUTE Laterally AS APPROPRIATE.
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